

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13

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P R 130933Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8261

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 5361

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJECT: POST MORTEM ON URBAN WORKERS CASE

REF: SEOUL 5146

BEGIN SUMMARY: BLUE HOUSE PROTOCOL SECRETARY PHILIP CHOE HAS PROVIDED POLCOUNS INTERESTING POST MORTEM ON RECENT DETENTION, INVESTIGATION, AND RELEASE OF KOREAN MINISTERS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF SEOUL METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO CHOE WHEN HOME MINISTER KIM CHI-YOL FIRST BROUGHT CASE PRIVATELY TO PRESIDENT PARK EARLY JUNE AND GOT PRESIDENT'S PERMISSION TO PROCEED WITH INVESTIGATION THERE WAS LITTLE AWARENESS OF IT AND ITS POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE IMPLICATIONS ELSEWHERE IN BLUE HOUSE OR IN OTHER MINISTRIES. REAL AWARENESS DEVELOPED LATE JUNE AT TIME HOME MINISTER ON VERGE TURNING CASE OVER TO PROSECUTION WITH STRONG PROBABILITY THAT PROSECUTION WOULD INDICT DEFENDANTS. CHOE NOT PRECISELY CLEAR ABOUT ROLES PLAYED BY VARIOUS PRINCIPLES AT THAT TIME BUT AFFIRMED THAT KCIA DIRECTOR SHIN CHIK-SU WITH HELP OF MINISTER OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION KIM SONG-JIN AND OTHERS IN BLUE HOUSE STAFF FIRST MANAGED TO WIN TEMPORARY DELAY, SO THAT CASE COULD BE STUDIED AND OVERSEAS EMBASSIES PARTICULARLY IN U.S. COULD BE PROPERLY ADVISED

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REGARDING HOW TO HANDLE ANTICIPATED ADVERSE OVERSEAS REACTION.

FROM JUNE 26 TO JULY 3 CASE WAS DULY STUDIED, ARGUMENTS AGAINST PROSECUTION WERE MARSHALLED AND PRESENTED TO PRESIDENT WHO FINALLY DECIDED AGAINST PROSECUTION. ACCORDING CHOE, WHO CLAIMED TO PLAY PERSONAL ROLE IN REVIEW OF CASE, BASIC REASON FOR REVERSAL WAS CONCERN OVER FOREIGN REACTION. CHOE, WHO ADMITTED HAVING NO LEGAL QUALIFICATIONS, CLAIMED THERE DID APPEAR FACTUAL BASIS FOR ROKG CONCERN ABOUT ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES OF SMCO MEMBERS, ALTHOUGH OTHER SOURCES HAVE INDICATED TO US THERE WERE REAL QUESTIONS IN BLUE HOUSE AND ELSEWHERE ABOUT "LEGAL VALIDITY" OF CASE.

2. CHOE ALSO REPORTED INTENSE LAST MINUTE MANEUVERING JULY 5 OVER PUBLICITY, JUST PRIOR TO RELEASE FROM DETENTION OF LAST 3 SMCO MINISTERS, BETWEEN HOME AND JUSTICE MINISTERS ON ONE HAND AND SHIN CHIK-SU AND KIM SONG-JIN ON OTHER. HOME AND JUSTICE APPARENTLY PRESSED FOR PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT THAT MINISTERS BEING RELEASED DESPITE THEIR CLEAR GUILT BECAUSE OF FOREIGN PRESSURES. MCUI MINISTER KIM WITH KCIA DIRECTOR'S HELP HOWEVER, MANAGED TO BLOCK THIS ON GROUNDS IT WOULD AMOUNT TO "FLUNKYISM", WOULD CALL UNWARRANTED ATTENTION TO CASE IN U.S., AND WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. CHOE INDICATED THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE RESIDUAL BITTERNESS ON PART OF HOME AND JUSTICE MINISTERS ABOUT FINAL PRESIDENTIAL DECISION AS WELL AS REVERSAL ON PUBLICITY ISSUE.

3. ACCORDING CHOE FINAL DECISION IS GOOD INDICATOR PRESIDENT PARK'S PRESENT FRAME OF MIND REGARDING OVERALL POLITICAL SITUATION. PARK HE SAYS IS ACUTELY AWARE U.S. PUBLIC OPINION ON KOREA, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE OF FORTHCOMING U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, HOPES TO AVOID FURTHER EXACERBATING U.S. PRESSURES, AND AT SAME TIME IS SUFFICIENTLY CONFIDENT AND SATISFIED WITH CURRENT LEVEL HIS POLITICAL CONTROL OVER OPPOSITION ELEMENTS SO AS NOT TO WANT TO PRESS OPPOSITION FURTHER, AS LONG AS "THEY BEHAVE." CHOE THOUGHT PRESIDENT NOT NOW INCLINED TO INTRODUCE FURTHER CONTROL STEPS; ON OTHER HAND THERE WAS LITTLE CHANCE PARK WOULD REPEAL EMERGENCY MEASURE NO. 9, AS SOME HAVE RUMORED TO US. AS REGARDS CURRENT MYONGDONG TRIAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST KIM DAE-CHUNG AND OTHERS NO ONE KNOWS WHAT PRESIDENT WILL FINALLY DECIDE, ALTHOUGH THERE IS SOME FEELING IN BLUE HOUSE THAT HE WILL BE LENIENT WITH AT LEAST SOME OF MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS.

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4. AS REGARDS CAST OF GOVERNMENT CHARACTERS IN SMCO CASE KCIA DIRECTOR SHIM AND MCUI MINISTER KIM OBVIOUSLY HAVE COME OUT WELL, WITH SHIM'S PREVIOUSLY STRONG POSITION ENHANCED FURTHER. HOME MINISTER AS HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY ANTICIPATED BY CHOE AND OTHERS WHEN HE WAS APPOINTED LAST DECEMBER, HAS BEEN NOW SHOWN TO LACK POLITICAL SKILL AND SUBTLETY AND HIS INFLUENCE HAS INEVITABLY BEEN DIMINISHED. CHOE DID NOT ANTICIPATE PARK WOULD FIRE HOME

MINISTER HOWEVER, AT LEAST RIGHT AWAY. MINISTER OF UNIFICATION YU SANG-KUN ALSO HAS COME OUT BADLY SINCE HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR PUBLISHING AND CIRCULATING ANONYMOUSLY WRITTEN PAMPHLET ALLEGING THAT SMCO WORKERS WERE INVOLVED IN COMMUNIST CONSPIRACY.

5. IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEAKER CHONG IL-KWON TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT HE FOUND PRESIDENT PARK IN CONVERSATION SEVERAL DAYS AGO MUCH MORE RELAXED AND SELF-ASSURED ABOUT INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION THAN IN PAST. CHONG SAID THAT HE ALSO USED REPORT ON HIS RECENT SOUTHEAST ASIAN TRIP AS VEHICLE FOR REINFORCING PARK'S SENSE OF SELF-ASSURANCE. HE POINTED OUT TO PARK HOW MUCH STRONGER ROK IS THAN SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS.

6. COMMENT: CHOE HAS PROVED KNOWLEDGEABLE BLUE HOUSE SOURCE WHO ACCURATELY PREDICTED KCIA DIRECTOR/HOME MINISTER CONFRONTATION WOULD SURFACE AT TIME HOME MINISTER APPOINTED TO CABINET LAST DECEMBER. PLEASE PROTECT.  
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